



The Jonah Center for Earth and Art

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Testimony In Support of House Bill 5291 AAC Authorization for Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails.

Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee.

Among the Jonah Center's environmental and climate-related causes and projects is advocating for improved infrastructure for active transportation: sidewalks, crosswalks, multi-use trails, and safe accommodation for bicycles on busy streets. These improvements are necessary if we are to reduce vehicle-miles travelled by single passenger motor vehicles; to reduce roadway congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, and other forms of air pollution; to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists; and to improve the general health of our population by providing attractive and safe places for exercise. There are many benefits that arise from such facilities — even increased property values.

In 2019, the General Assembly recognized in legislation our project, [The Central CT Loop Trail](#), a 110-mile loop around the greater Hartford area and east to Willimantic. Completing this vision has been slow because of the limit of \$3 million on state bonding authorization for such projects. As a result, many critical gaps between trails are not being filled.

As an example: there is a 1200 foot gap in the Air Line Trail in East Hampton where the old rail bed lies in a gorge where there are utility poles and a running stream. A boardwalk section must be built to extend the Air Line Trail (without a dangerous on-road detour) to Portland. This short section will cost approximately \$1.4 million to complete. This project was not funded by the most recent Recreational Trails grant cycle because it would have consumed almost half of the \$3 million of available funding. But once this 1200 foot gap is filled, it will extend the Air Line Trail State Park immediately by 2.3 miles and allow for bicycle travel between Willimantic and Portland.

Our mission: to foster sustainable relationships among people, other creatures, energy resources, and the environment and to promote interdisciplinary community partnerships in scientific, artistic, and other cultural endeavors.

Raising the bonding authorization limit to \$6 million will make a significant difference to the pace at which bike-travel infrastructure can be built, will improve the quality of life for Connecticut residents, and provide longer stretches of continuous off-road bike trails that will attract visitors from out of state.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John C. Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "H".

John C. Hall, Executive Director

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